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SUBJECT: SERBIA: GOVERNMENT TEETERS AT PROSPECT OF EU ROLE IN  
KOSOVO

Summary  
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11. (SBU) The EU invitation to Serbia to sign an interim political agreement with EU member states has brought to the forefront the division between newly re-elected President Tadic and his coalition partner Prime Minister Kostunica over Europe, and threatens to bring down the government. The process of authorizing a government representative to sign this agreement in Brussels on February 7 has forced an immediate confrontation between Tadic and Kostunica. Kostunica is characterizing the EU decision to send a mission to Kosovo and the prospect of an imminent declaration of Kosovo independence as threats to Serbia's territorial integrity and constitutional order. While the foreign affairs apparatus tries to move the Interim Agreement process forward to authorize Deputy PM Djelic to sign the agreement, the PM has called on Parliament to take up both the agreement and the prospect of an EU mission to Kosovo. The final step in authorizing Djelic requires the Cabinet to convene. The Cabinet votes should easily line up on the side of the President, but the session will certainly end without PM endorsement and quite possibly with dissolution of the Government. End summary.

EU Cooperation vs EU Meddling  
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12. (U) The signing of a political agreement on cooperation between Serbia and the European Union member states is set for February 7 in Brussels. The Serbian Government received a copy of the agreement on February 4 and has set in motion the process of authorizing Deputy Minister Djelic to sign. The two-part process involves a technical consideration and approval by a government council and a final authorization of the prime minister's cabinet. The first review is set to take place on February 5, and MFA Political Director Borislav Stefanovic told poloff that the votes in this body line up easily in favor of signing. The cabinet review, Stefanovic said, would likewise be a simple matter, since Democratic Party and G-17 Plus members outnumber detractors (Kostunica's Democratic Party of Serbia and the New Serbia Party). At least two factors complicate the authorization process, however. First, the cabinet generally meets on Thursdays, and the PM would need to call a special session in order to empower Djelic in time to travel to Brussels; and, second, that Kostunica is unlikely to accept the cabinet's approval of the authorization.

13. (SBU) PM Foreign Affairs Advisor Miroslav Cestovic told poloff that "we are looking at a distinct and clear possibility" of government collapse on or before February 7. Cestovic said that Kostunica will not let the matter of agreement signing, which is being billed as a step toward European integration, be considered outside the "broader political picture" which included the February 4 EU adoption of a Joint Action to deploy a mission to Kosovo. Kostunica opposes the deployment as a violation of the UN Charter and the Serbian Constitution. Were this agreement to stand on its

own, Cestovic said, it would be assessed differently. Cestovic said that he was very pessimistic that the Government would survive the week; Stefanovic put the probability at greater than not that the Government would fall.

14. (U) All Belgrade media reported on the EU decision and on reactions of the Serbian Government, and members of the Prime Ministers Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), particularly. Pro-government daily Politika carried the front page headline: "EU sends mission to Kosovo, stormy reaction from Belgrade." According to Politika, DSS Education Minister Loncar said that the EU's decision to send simultaneously the Interim Agreement and the document of the EU mission to Kosovo, just one day after presidential elections, was an act of "naked blackmail." DSS spokesperson Andrija Mladenovic called the EU decision a direct threat on territorial integrity and sovereignty of Serbia. Daily Vecernje Novosti ran an article, entitled "the EU mission divides the government," describing the substance of the EU Joint Action document and reported sharp reaction of the DSS ministers. The front page headline of tabloid Kurir ran: "The EU 'congratulates' Tadic by sending a mission to Kosovo," saying that the EU act was a "finger in the government's eye." Daily Blic reported that the EU was accelerating actions related to Kosovo, and characterized the EU's decision as the first post-presidential elections test for the Serbian Government.

Prime Minister: EU Actions Constitute Threat to Serbia  
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15. (SBU) Kostunica issued a release on February 5 declaring that the EU decision to send an illegal mission to Kosovo represented a reliable predictor of an impending declaration of Kosovo independence. The EU decision directly jeopardizes the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and constitutional order of Serbia, he said, and the decision on illegal deployment of an EU mission meant that the EU, together with Albanian separatists, was moving toward

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Kosovo independence. The EU proposal to sign a political agreement, therefore was a trick. Serbia's signing would, in effect, be an endorsement of the deployment to Kosovo and of Kosovo's independence, making Serbia the first to recognize the state of Kosovo.

Begin Unofficial Embassy Translation of PM Release:

Public statement by Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica

EU's decision to send its mission to Kosovo and Metohia by violating the international law in order to implement Ahtisaari's rejected plan on independent Kosovo, represents a certain announcement that Albanian separatists would proclaim Province's unilateral independence. By this decision, EU has directly endangered sovereignty, territorial integrity and the Constitution of Serbia. Decision to send the mission means that EU and the Albanian separatists are creating a false Albanian state on the Serbian territory by violating all international regulations and rules.

EU's proposal to sign a political Agreement with Serbia and at the same time send its mission to rip our country to pieces, is a delusion in which Serbia's signature on the Agreement with EU is actually a signature on Kosovo's independence. In this way, Serbia is to become the first country that indirectly recognized independent Kosovo.

Out of these reasons, our National Parliament should have its session immediately, before the proclamation of the unilateral independence of Kosovo. On this session, some necessary decisions should be adopted in accordance with the Constitution and existing resolutions, decisions concerning the EU's mission and the offered Political Agreement.

Belgrade, February 5, 2008

End Text.

¶6. (U) Cestovic and Stefanovic assumed that dissolution of the Government would ultimately lead to early parliamentary elections. The process of dissolving the government, establishing a caretaker government, and calling for elections is not yet entirely clear, and post will provide details septel as events unfold.

Comment  
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¶7. (SBU) The Serbian Government is teetering. There is a chance that Kostunica's demand for parliamentary consideration will provide the political cover he needs to agree to the signing of the EU agreement. More likely, however, parliamentary debate will be hot and fuel the fire under Kostunica. Boris Tadic's victory in Sunday's election may steel him and his pro-European DS/G-17 colleagues to challenge the Prime Minister. It's a game of chicken and the result could be government collapse.

¶8. (SBU) If the government fails, we will see an even more volatile political environment in Belgrade. This prospect should not deter the international community from continuing to move ahead resolutely on Kosovo. End Comment.

MUNTER